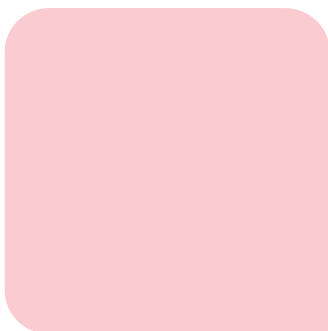


Are we there yet? Identifying the characteristics of social care organisations that successfully promote diversity



SCIE's aim is to improve the experience of people who use social care services, by developing and promoting knowledge about good practice in social care. We pull together knowledge from diverse sources through working with a broad range of organisations and people. We share this knowledge freely, supporting those working in social care and empowering service users.

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Introduction

An integral part of the White Paper *Our health, our care, our say: A new direction for community services*¹ is the commitment to promote diversity by developing a workforce that is able to challenge discrimination, by making direct payments more available and by making greater use of the voluntary and community sector. It comes at a time of heightened interest and action in promoting the diversity agenda. While some of this interest has arisen from the death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, it is also the result of continued discrimination and disadvantage impacting on the choices and control available to black and minority ethnic communities.

References

¹Department of Health (2006) *Our health, our care, our say: A new direction for community services*, White Paper, London: The Stationery Office.

This discussion paper considers the characteristics of social care organisations that successfully promote diversity, and explores research on the barriers to promoting diversity and how they can be overcome.

After exploring how the term 'diversity' is used, we suggest that diversity means taking account of the complexities of the lives of individuals, of groups of people, and the impact these complexities have on their experience of discrimination and disadvantage. In this context, the focus is on black and minority ethnic people as a group with multiple identities. So an organisation that successfully promotes diversity will take account of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, social class, religion and faith, and 'race' issues.

This discussion paper draws on census data to demonstrate the higher rates of long term limiting illness and disability among black and minority ethnic communities in comparison to white communities, and how women in black and minority ethnic communities are often more affected than men. The data is supplemented by evidence of a greater risk of unemployment, lower incomes and poorer quality housing among black and minority ethnic groups. Black and minority ethnic

communities are also less likely to benefit from a range of government initiatives that address social exclusion.

The data on needs, discrimination and disadvantage are not available for all communities – for example, data on the Chinese community is limited. Evidence on the take-up of mainstream services by black and minority ethnic people, and evaluations on the effectiveness of service provision in Britain, are also lacking. Nonetheless, we identify the barriers and steps to effectively promote diversity.

Barriers

The table overleaf summarises the barriers to promoting diversity and highlights some of the evidence that studies have produced.

Much of the evidence points to inadequate and poor-quality support from social care providers. As a result, black and minority ethnic people (and their carers) who need support continue to struggle to find services that provide them with choice and control.

Barrier

Lack of knowledge among black and minority ethnic communities about available support

Lack of appropriate services

Poor quality services

Lack of choice

Workers without effective communication skills

Workers without the skills and experience to work with racially and culturally diverse communities

Direct and institutional discrimination

Evidence

Families with disabled children are coping with limited resources and a lack of support.

Few appropriate family support services, such as parent and toddler groups for Somali families, in safe and convenient locations.

An assumption that the lack of service take-up by black and minority ethnic families with disabled children is the result of a lack of need.

The provision of homes for black and minority ethnic disabled people that meet the 'Lifetime Homes' standard, are either too small to accommodate larger family groups or are based in an area where existing social and support networks cannot be maintained.

Workers carrying out assessments when they are unable to speak the same language as the service user.

White managers are unable to provide direction to black and minority ethnic workers.

Prevailing stereotypes about particular communities leads to the assumption that informal or family support is always available, resulting in communities having to 'look after their own'.

Promoting diversity

The discussion paper then suggests that to promote diversity effectively, we need to stop doing the things that create barriers and start doing the things that break them down.² The steps, and the evidence for them, are considered in this discussion paper.

Black and minority ethnic voluntary organisations are often identified by their service users as effective providers of support. However, there seems to be few mainstream and statutory agencies that can demonstrate how they promote diversity effectively. This suggests that we need to pay closer attention to the process of change and not just to what needs to change.

References

² Audit Commission (2004) *The journey to race equality*, London: Audit Commission.

Steps

Implement a needs-led approach

Implement a policy and monitoring framework to promote diversity

Implement an ethnic record keeping and monitoring system that produces information that is used

Plan for the delivery of services that promote diversity

Build processes and a workforce that can implement effective engagement

Evidence

Systems exist in policy development, which use evidence of needs to plan the delivery of services. Workers with knowledge of the needs of diverse communities can implement interview and engagement techniques that allow service users to articulate their needs. Service user involvement is fundamental to the engagement process.

Organisations are clear about their objectives as part of existing policy and monitoring frameworks that integrate diversity.

Information on ethnicity is used by the workers required to collect that information.

Organisations prioritise the development of services for black and minority ethnic communities, including allocating money and staff time and involving black and minority ethnic voluntary organisations in the planning process.

Workers have appropriate language skills, including sign language and the skills to work with people with learning disabilities. Consultations engage a range of communities in a genuine discussion of their priorities and needs. Clear and timely information is provided that enables service users to know and understand what is happening.

Steps (continued)

Recruit, retain and develop a workforce that can promote diversity

Organisations demonstrate better frontline practice

Evidence (continued)

The role of frontline staff is fundamental to promoting diversity. A diverse workforce positively influences how diverse communities are engaged and can lead organisations to implement wider changes. What is less clear is whether such a workforce should be seen as the principal vehicle for effecting change.

Confident and competent workers communicate effectively, use their knowledge in a nonstereotypical manner and demonstrate flexibility in their approach. Workers draw on available resources and have access to managers who are knowledgeable about diversity and are competent supervisors.

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